

REMARKS

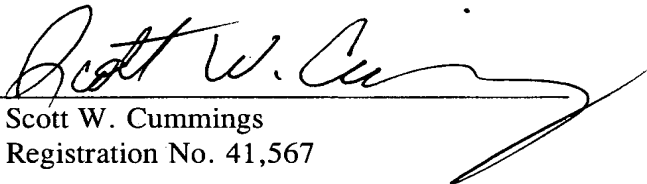
Upon entry of the foregoing, claims 30-33 are pending and await an examination on the merits.

Applicants have amended the present application in a manner that supports an interference, and complies with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §135(b). Based on the foregoing claims amendments, applicants expect that an interference will be declared with U.S. Patent No. 6,198,472 to Armstrong et al. (issued March 6, 2001). A Request for Interference will be filed in the near future in order to comply with the requirements of 37 C.F.R. § 1.607.

Applicants respectfully request expedited handling by the Examiner. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at his/her earliest convenience to schedule an interview to discuss the issues presented by this Preliminary Amendment.

Respectfully submitted,

BURNS, DOANE, SWECKER & MATHIS, L.L.P.

By: 
Scott W. Cummings
Registration No. 41,567

P.O. Box 1404
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1404
(703) 836-6620

Date: December 3, 2001